

ORNAMENT FOR CLEAR REALIZATION - PERFECTION OF WISDOM STUDIES

Class 1 - 03 April 2007 - Tuesday

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, McLeod Ganj, India

Teacher - Ven. Kelsang Wangmo

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COURSE INFORMATION

Today is the first day of a very special subject, which is called the Study of the *Perfection of Wisdom* [Skt. *prajna-paramita*; Tib. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin* - abbrv. as *phar phyin*]

^a *Sutras*. Usually, when this is studied in the monasteries and nunneries, it takes about six years. I don't want to rush the presentation of this course in any way because there is no point in abbreviating the course, because really the entire sutric teachings are included in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

Length.

So this course may take six years, and this is just the first year. I'm going to be around and some of you may be around, may not be around, whatever. I'll just continue on. So this is the first year. And I'll go exactly the same way as we study the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* in the nunneries and the monasteries or at IBD, at the Institute for Buddhist Dialectical Studies¹. And so, the classes will go on from today until August². So that's a long time. I didn't want to make it any longer considering six month visas. And I'm sure a lot of you won't be here all the time, and it doesn't matter. Maybe just get a taste of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and continue on studying at some later time somewhere else, with someone else.

Background.

So this is the fourth year we've been teaching English language Buddhist philosophy classes at the Dialectics School. Some of you have been here all of these years, and some of you are new. But I've been trying to present exactly the same courses as we study in Tibetan at the Dialectics School. So as preliminaries to the study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, we've held courses on the *Collected Topics*, Mind and Mental Factors or *Awareness and Knowledge*, and the [philosophical systems of] *Tenets*. Those are the traditional introductory courses to this study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. However, if you did not attend those courses, it does not really matter; I'm going to go through some of the more important points covered in those courses again, so that you won't miss any of the content of this class.

Schedule.

The classes will be held three times a week: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from four to 5:30. If people are interested in having discussion groups on class topics, please speak with me. Maybe we can arrange to hold discussions on the alternate days of the week. The reason for discussion groups is that, when we study this specific subject at the

¹ The official English translation of IBD's Tibetan name, is Institute of Buddhist Dialectics. Ven. Wangmo often refers to IBD as the "Dialectics School".

² Get Ani-la's trip dates to Germany

Dialectics School or in the monasteries, every day they have at least four hours of debate. So this is an important part of it. Not just the class itself, but discussing and debating with each other is really important. I'll try to do a little bit of that in class, as much as I can, by asking you questions. And you are all encouraged to share your answers; okay. Because there are a lot of points that are not clear and that give rise to debates.

Course materials.

Also there will be some material available. Not the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* themselves, because the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* that this class deals with is in 100,000 verses. So obviously that's a lot of material and a bit difficult. Also it is not that helpful because the way the Buddha taught 2,500 years ago was very appropriate for the people then, but it is very hard for us to understand now.

So we are going to rely on two commentaries on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. They are both by Indian scholar-practitioners. So one is by Maitreya -- well, he's actually not Indian. I'll say more about Maitreya, an incredible highly realized being called Maitreya. And I'll talk about Maitreya later. His commentary is called the *Ornament for Clear Realization* [Skt. *Abhisamayālamkāra*]³. The other commentary is called the *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*⁴ by an Indian called Haribhadra. I'll talk more about him. These are just names right now that don't mean a lot to people. Don't worry about these; they will become clearer as we go along. I'm just saying this because if you want this material, you can let me know, it will be made available. You won't need it right away because there's a bit of an introduction we need to cover before we get at the actual text.

So the *Ornament for Clear Realization* by Maitreya. Unlike the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* which are very, very long, the *Ornament* is very, very short. So the problem with the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, the reason why we cannot actually go -- well, we can read them, but it would not be so helpful, because -- have you ever seen the *Heart Sutra*?

Many of you must have read the *Heart Sutra*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama always recites it before teachings. That's one of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. In there, you see a lot of repetitions -- 'there's no sound, there's no form,' etc. So the other sutras are similar to that. The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* actually talk about Emptiness. Then they explain all the phenomena that are empty of inherent existence. And they list those phenomena, or the Buddha did. When he taught those *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, he said this doesn't exist; this doesn't exist, this doesn't exist, and gave a long list. This is mainly what the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* is composed of.

So there's an introduction, telling you who taught those teachings, when and where did the Buddha give those teachings, who was there at the time. Sometimes the Buddha by himself spoke. Sometimes, he inspired one of his disciples to ask a question, and another disciple would then answer or the Buddha himself would then answer. Because they happened through the blessing, through the inspiration of the Buddha, these are said to be the words of the Buddha. At that time, this was very helpful. Some person heard 'form is not inherently existent'. Another person heard, 'sound is not inherently existent'. And just on the basis of those few words, they understood the meaning of Emptiness. But those are just the words; that's what is transmitted now to us. But the Buddha actually

³ Usually referred to herein as "the *Ornament*". Sanskrit: *Abhisamayālaṅkāra: Abhisamayālaṅkāra-nāma-prajñāpāramitopadeśa-ūstra-kārikā*. Tibetan: *mNgon par rtogs pa'i rgyan*. By Maitreyanātha.

⁴ In Sanskrit: *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-nāma-prajñāpāramitopadeśa-upadeśa-ūstra-vṛiti*. In Tibetan: *She rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan shes bya ba'i 'grel ba*. In English: *Commentary on the 'Ornament for Clear Realizations, A Treatise of Oral Instruction on the Perfection of Wisdom'* - commonly known as the *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*. The text used in this course was translated by FPMT Italy for the Masters Program at the Lama Tsong Khapa Institute 1998-1999; and the text of the *Ornament* was extracted from this.

being here and teaching us, that is unfortunately not possible. So therefore this style of teaching for us right now is not that helpful.

So then we take the *Ornament for Clear Realization*, which is one of the commentary on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, but here the problem is that it is too terse, too condensed. Again, sometimes it is just lists of words, lists of different minds, of different meditations, of different practices. Again, it is too short, in this case too condensed. And so therefore, we rely on this second commentary, Haribhadra's *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*. So this, hopefully, is what will happen for us, it clarifies the meaning of the *Ornament*. That is the second commentary.

So these two, if you want to have a commentary, please sign up. The only thing is we have to ask you to pay for your own copy. So just the exact costs of copying that we will ask you to cover. For those of you who will not be around McLeod Ganj for very long, I don't know how useful these will be. Because we are not going to start with these that soon, so it is up to you. Because this year is going to be the first of six years, I suppose; right? That's what it takes in the monasteries. So this year, we will not go into a lot of detail with respect to the *Ornament*. Actually we will just examine the first couple of verses, but those cover a lot of material.

So this is basically the technical material, the course material, etc.

PROLOGUE

First I thought to start off reading something you find in Tibetan commentaries contain. It actually tells you in a few sentences, the life story of the Buddha. So I'm going to read it out because we don't have any other materials so I'll just read it to you. And then explain a little more about the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

The peerless teacher, King of the Shakyas, initially generated the mind dedicated to attaining highest enlightenment [for the sake of all sentient beings]. Then [in order to actualize his wish], for three countless aeons, he amassed the collections of merit and wisdom. Finally, in the vicinity of Bodhgaya, he became perfectly enlightened.

At Varanasi, he turned the wheel of doctrine of the four noble truths for the five good ascetics. Then on Vulture Peak [so called because the hill is shaped like a vulture], he turned the wheel of doctrine of characterlessness [i.e., that phenomena are not established by way of their own character]. Then, at Vaishali and other places, he extensively turned the wheel of doctrine of good differentiation.⁵

So the beginning just tells us the Buddha generated a determination to become enlightened. Practiced for a long time - "three countless aeons" is a really long time. And then in the end became enlightened in what is known as Bodhgaya in India. And then he gave three sets of teachings. All of his teachings can be included into those three sets: the First Turning of the Wheel, the Second Turning of the Wheel, and the Third Turning of the Wheel.

⁵ From the *Precious Garland of Tenets* [གཡུང་པའི་མཐའི་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་བྲེང་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞག་སོ།] by Gon-chok Jik-may Wang-bo [དགོན་མཆོག་འཇིགས་མེད་དབང་པོ་] (1728-1791), who was the reincarnation of འཇམ་དབྱངས་བཞད་པའི་རྫོང་འག་དབང་བརྩོན་འགྲུས་ (1648-1712) aka either - འཇམ་དབྱངས་བཞད་པ་ - or - འག་དབང་བརྩོན་འགྲུས་. transl. by Jeffrey Hopkins in *Cutting Through Appearances*

FIRST TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

So, the first teachings he gave, just after he became enlightened, at Varanasi [Sarnath] to five ascetics who had previously practiced with him. I assume you all know the story, so I'm not going to go into detail. He turned the Wheel of Doctrine of the Four Noble Truths. However, the teachings of that Wheel were not just given one time at the teaching he gave in Varanasi. Rather, Buddha taught a whole set of teachings over a period time.

The teachings of the First Turning of the Wheel can be divided into two: Wisdom and Method, the teachings of philosophy [the view] and practice. In the First Turning of the Wheel, Buddha taught what is known as the Hinayana view and the Hinayana practice, i.e., the philosophical system of the Hinayana and the Hinayana practice. Hinayana can also be translated as **Fundamental Vehicle**. I think that is a good translation. I don't like the translation *Lesser Vehicle*. I prefer **Fundamental Vehicle** and I'll explain why. So Buddha gave the teachings of the Fundamental Vehicle or the Hinayana teachings.

Fundamental Vehicle View

So with respect to the Fundamental Vehicle “view” or “tenet” or philosophical teachings - these refer to the same thing -- Buddha taught two tenet systems. Those of you who have studied the different tenet systems have heard of those. The Great Exposition school [Skt. Vaibhashika; Tib. bye brag smra] tenets and the Sutra school tenets [Skt. Sautrantikas; Tib. mdo sde pa dag]. With respect to the philosophical view, he gave the two lower views with respect to reality.

Additionally, separately from the tenet teachings, Buddha also taught the Fundamental Vehicle practices, the Fundamental Vehicle method which is a different corpus of teachings. People may get confused by this, the differences between the wisdom and method teachings.

Fundamental Vehicle practice⁶ refers to the practices that you engage in if you want to attain nirvana, i.e., self-liberation. If you want to become self-liberated, if you want to rid of the mind grasping onto the self and the delusions resulting from that grasping. This is what we mean by the Fundamental Vehicle practice.

The difference between Fundamental Vehicle practice and Universal Vehicle⁷ practice is in terms of the goal. So the Buddha showed a path that leads to self-liberation. In order to reach that goal, the Fundamental Vehicle tenet is useless.

The Fundamental Vehicle tenets are the philosophical systems of the Great Exposition school and the Sutra school and they present very coarse view of 'selflessness.' The followers of these Fundamental Vehicle tenets, the followers of the Great Exposition school and the Sutra school, do not assert subtle Emptiness. But in order to become self-liberated, in order to practice the Fundamental Vehicle path, you must realize Emptiness; that's essential.

So you see that the two [Fundamental Vehicle teachings on wisdom and practice] are different. They share the same name in terms of *Fundamental Vehicle*. However, to actually achieve the goal of the Fundamental Vehicle practice, you need a realization of Emptiness; and for that you need the realization of the highest tenets. To attain nirvana,

⁶ Ven. Wangmo noted here, “I'm not going to say Fundamental Vehicle as it's too long”. Even though she prefers to use English rather than Sanskrit terminology in this course, in class, she continues to use “Hinayana” rather than “Fundamental Vehicle”. However, the transcripts of classes will replace “Hinayana” with Fundamental Vehicle.

⁷ Ven. Wangmo prefers to translate Mahayana as Universal Vehicle rather than Great Vehicle. And since she prefers to use English rather than Sanskrit terminology, “Universal Vehicle” will be used throughout in lieu of Mahayana.

i.e., self-liberation, you need to realize the philosophical system that is “shared with” or propounded by the highest tenet system.

Now the Fundamental Vehicle tenets are philosophical systems that the Buddha explained as stepping-stones to the more difficult tenets, the more difficult philosophical systems that present Emptiness.

So the Buddha's teachings can be divided into Wisdom and Method. Method includes everything like the practice, the different kinds of paths and so forth. Here, the Fundamental Vehicle practice. Even the First Turning of the Wheel we can make this division: the Method and the Wisdom. The method is practices we need to follow the Fundamental Vehicle path and to become self-liberated. The Wisdom here refers to the Fundamental Vehicle philosophical system, which is useless for a Fundamental Vehicle practitioner [insofar as meditative realization these tenets cannot bring about self-liberation].

So these are philosophical teachings that the Buddha gave as a preparation for the higher view, for the Universal Vehicle tenets where he taught Emptiness, the final view. The final explanation of the Wisdom View that Buddha gave was the Emptiness of inherent existence. And most of you, if you have attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings, you know what that is roughly. But *knowing about it* and *really knowing* are two different things. So understanding Emptiness is said to be extremely difficult. And it is so deep that there is no way that we can just jump right in there. So we need to go step-by-step - subtler, subtler, subtler; deeper, deeper, deeper -- to understand it.

So the Fundamental Vehicle tenets are a preparation for that understanding. So the Great Exposition school and the Sutra school lay out systems of *selflessness* that are quite amazing, but still not deep enough. But they help us to move our understanding on from there. So that's why the Buddha gave those teachings.

So he started off With respect to the goal of spiritual practice, Buddha first taught about self-liberation. Right in the beginning, he did not teach about the goal of attaining Buddhahood. He started off very slowly. Similarly, with respect to the view, he didn't go right into

Fundamental Vehicle Selflessness

Emptiness; he started by teaching a coarser kind of selflessness. So this is a basic introduction to First Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine. During the First Turning of the Wheel, the Fundamental Vehicle practice and Fundamental Vehicle tenet systems are the two teachings that Buddha gave. But he also said that all phenomena exist by way of their own character. All phenomena exist from their own side. Because he taught the Fundamental Vehicle tenet, he taught the view of selflessness. He explained what does not exist and what does exist in accordance with the Fundamental Vehicle tenets. So he said that there is a certain self that does not exist – a permanent, partless, independent self. That does not exist. But he also explained the phenomena that do exist. So he introduced Emptiness. But what else do we need to understand Emptiness? Any idea? What else is important to understand Emptiness; like two sides of one coin.

Fundamental Vehicle - Dependent Arising & Mind

That's it, *dependent arising*. I can lip-read. So dependent arising. Buddha explained dependent arising -- not in the subtle way that he did with the Universal Vehicle teachings, but on a coarse level. So the Buddha introduced dependent arising. He introduced *Cause and Effect*; that is a coarser kind of dependent arising.

He also introduced the idea of the mind and the object being interrelated which is very important in the Buddhist teachings: there's no objective world out there. The mind and

the object are very closely related. We actually know this. Why do we have sayings like 'Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder'? So that kind of idea; this connection between mind and the external world.

So the Buddha introduced those two. He said impermanent phenomena arise from causes; so they are not completely independent. And the mind is important: we need a mind to perceive objects. And he said phenomena exist from their own side: they exist *out there*, but they do not exist [completely] independently.

So for about twenty years, Buddha gave all of these teachings that we have as Fundamental Vehicle sutras. He did not just teach the Fundamental Vehicle in one sermon at Varanasi on the Four Noble Truths; that is just one example of these teachings. He gave many teachings everywhere he went. It's said that anything he did, being the Buddha, was done just for the benefit of others. So they say that the Buddha's smiling had a reason. People would ask the Buddha, 'Oh, why does the Buddha smile?' Because he would have some reason for smiling that benefited others. People wanted to know, and would ask, why Buddha did anything. So Buddhas taught people in an incredible way because everything he did was a teaching. But for many years, the teachings basically were restricted to the Fundamental Vehicle teachings, Fundamental Vehicle practice, Fundamental Vehicle tenets.

SECOND TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF THE DOCTRINE

Then Buddha started the Second Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine at Vulture Peak, Rajghir in India. This is one of the popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites and was named *Vulture Peak* because the hill is said to be shaped like a vulture. When you read the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, they talk about that place: 'At one time the Buddha was residing at Vulture Peak in Rajghir, and there was a great assembly of monks and a great assembly of gods and demi-gods' and so forth.

Sounds a bit like there were loads of people and a huge place, but really when you go there, Vulture Peak itself is a small place. In some of the texts you find an explanation: The Buddha did not teach the Second Turning of the Wheel, the Universal Vehicle, to as many people as attended the Fundamental Vehicle teachings, because look at Vulture Peak, not that many people could fit upon it. So not all of those who participated in those teachings possessed coarse-form human bodies which require a fixed amount of space. Perhaps other types of beings attended the Vulture Peak teachings along with human beings; beings that we cannot perceive such as gods, demi-gods, beings from different realms. A host of such beings could fit on Vulture Peak. However, the size of Vulture Peak is one of a number of factors supporting the view that compared to the number of people attending the Universal Vehicle teachings, a larger number of people received Buddha's teachings on the Fundamental Vehicle.

The Second Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine taught the Mahayana or the Universal Vehicle (often translated as *Great Vehicle*). Again, these teachings can be divided into the practice and the philosophical system; or the Method and the Wisdom teachings.

Universal Vehicle Wisdom teachings.

The Wisdom teachings refer to Emptiness, the Universal Vehicle tenets. And of the [two main] Universal Vehicle tenet [systems], the Middle Way tenets.

When we talk about the Four Tenets, the four philosophical systems of Buddhism: they are: the *Great Exposition* school [Skt. Vaibhashika; Tib. bye brag smra] and the *Sutra* [tenets] school [Skt. Sautrantikas; Tib. mdo sde pa dag], covered in the First Turning of the Wheel. The Universal Vehicle tenets are the *Mind Only* school [Skt. ; Tib.] and the *Middle Way* [Skt. ; Tib.] school.

During the Second Turning of the Wheel, Buddha introduced the Universal Vehicle. And with respect to the view, he introduced the Middle Way school. He went right up to the top. He introduced the Middle Way school. What he did was he explained Emptiness and dependent arising from the subtlest point of view. In teaching Emptiness Buddha said that all phenomena do not exist by way of their own character. You remember, we said that during the First Turning of the Wheel, he said, 'all phenomena exist by way of their own character.' During the Second Turning, he said, not a single phenomenon exists by way of its own character. In other words, every phenomenon is empty of true existence.

So that's what he taught during the Second Turning of the Wheel with respect to the Wisdom.

With respect to the Method, the Practice, Buddha taught bodhicitta, the six perfections, all those perfections that are uncommon to the Universal Vehicle.

THIRD TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF DOCTRINE OF GOOD DIFFERENTIATION⁸

And how did the last turning of the wheel come about? Why did Buddha turn the wheel of dharma for a third time? Because some of the students, disciples of the Buddha, went to the Buddha and said, "During the First Turning of the Wheel in Varanasi and other places, you said, 'All phenomena exist from their own side, by way of their own character.' Later on at Vulture Peak and so forth, you said, 'Nothing exists from its own side.' So how come? Isn't that contradictory? What the Buddha says cannot be contradictory, so what did you mean?"

So the people who asked him this, they had passed beyond the Fundamental Vehicle tenets. They could bear more than just the coarse kind of selflessness that Buddha taught to those people like the Great Exposition and the Sutra school proponents. That's all that they could take. They would have fallen into some kind of extreme view. For those people for whom the subtle view of Emptiness was too profound to comprehend, the Buddha taught the Fundamental Vehicle tenets.

Mind Only Tenets

However, some people could understand more than the selflessness taught in Fundamental Vehicle. They could take more than that but the subtlest view was still too deep for them. Emptiness – nothing exists from its own side; there's no inherent existence – that was a step too far. So to them, Buddha taught the Third Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine, where he said -- it's called the Turning of the Wheel of Good Differentiation. So Buddha *differentiated* [phenomena]. He said, 'Some phenomena exist from their own side or exist by way of their own characters and others do not.' What is that view? The Mind Only school.

During the Third Turning of the Wheel, the Buddha taught the Mind Only school, because he said, to those people who are ready for it – those people for whom Emptiness was too deep and the Fundamental Vehicle tenets were too coarse – he said to them, "Well, phenomena which are 'permanent', except Emptiness, such phenomena do not exist from their own side. But Emptiness and everything that is impermanent, those phenomena exist from their own side." This is part of the Mind Only tenet system. So, the Third Turning is said to be the Wheel of Good Differentiation because it differentiated well between the Fundamental Vehicle tenets and the Middle Way tenets.

Now unfortunately, this is not part of this course, I cannot really go into a lot of detail. Some people may get confused and think, 'I thought the Mind Only school was about something completely different.' There is more to the Mind Only than just that [tenet].

⁸ See NOTES re exposition of Third Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine – Imputational Natures

However, ascertaining that there are some phenomena that exist from their own side while other phenomena do not is part of the Mind Only tenets.

So, I'll say it again: Impermanent phenomena and Emptiness, they exist from their own side, by way of their own character. But all *permanent* things [permanent in the sense of not changing moment-by-moment, not in the sense of 'eternal'], which are abstracts (except for Emptiness), concepts, phenomena which cannot be apprehended except by a conceptual mind, those things do not exist by way of their own character.

Then of course, Buddha also gave teachings for the Mind Only school with which we are more familiar: that phenomena do not exist 'out there' [external to the mind apprehending them].

This brings us back to what was said with respect to the Fundamental Vehicle tenet:

The Buddha did not just teach coarse selflessness in the Fundamental Vehicle tenets, but he also taught how phenomena exist. How phenomena exist. What is dependent arising. In expounding the Fundamental Vehicle tenets, Buddha explained that [a] phenomena exist in dependence upon causes and conditions; and that [b] there is a relationship between the object and the subject — the object is externally out there, but still we determine that something exists because 'it is cognized by a mind.'

During the exposition of Mind Only tenets, Buddha said that phenomena do not exist externally out there. That is just an appearance to the mind; there is nothing out there. All that really exists is our mind. Nothing externally is there; only mere appearances. That's what he taught during the Third Turning of the Wheel.

Insert here from NOTES - p. 1-Ornament quote on p. 2: { Philosophically fundamental idea of First Wheel: all phenomena without exception are established by way of their own character and there is no cause for differentiation among them (Hinayana tenet). In terms of practice it shows path to self-liberation (Hinayana / Minimalist Vehicle).

Philosophically fundamental idea of second wheel: all phenomena without exception are not established by way of their own character and in this respect there is no cause for differentiation among them (Madhyamika tenet). In terms of practice, Bodhicitta, 6 perfections, etc. (Mahayana / Universal Vehicle).

When Buddha was questioned about the apparent conflict between these two teachings, He taught the third wheel: Philosophically fundamental idea of third wheel: THOROUGHLY ESTABLISHED NATURES, such as *Emptinesses*, and OTHER-POWERED NATURES, i.e., *impermanent phenomena* (such as houses, trees, etc.) are established by way of their own character.

IMPUTATIONAL NATURES, i.e. *permanent phenomena other than emptinesses* (such as uncompounded space, cessations, etc.) are not established by way of their own character.

The foregoing are Mind-only tenets. In terms of practice, Mind Only tenet holders follow the practices of Second Wheel (Mahayana).

The way of categorizing the three wheels of doctrine is found in the *Sutra Unravelling the Thought*.

It says: first wheel consists of teachings of four noble truths and the like, taught for the sake of the trainees of the Lesser Vehicle; essence of this wheel is the doctrine of how all things arise in dependence on the wheel of interdependent arising and co-existence.

Second wheel consists of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and the like, taught for the sake of trainees of the great vehicle; and that the third wheel, which includes the *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* itself was taught for the sake of both lesser and greater Vehicle

trainees. The *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* teaches that the third wheel is the highest and most direct.

The Mantrayana is linked to both, the Second and the Third Wheel.

[*The Ornament for the Essence of Explanation which is a commentary on the 'Ornament for Clear Realization'* by Gyeltsab Dharma Rinchen, p. xi, xii: The collection of the Mahayana teachings]]

SUMMATION OF TENETS TAUGHT IN THE THREE WHEELS

During the Second Turning of the Wheel, which presents the final [view], Buddha taught a view that is the middle way between what he said during the First Turning of the Wheel and the Third Turning.

During the First Turning of the Wheel, he taught that with respect to whether or not all phenomena exist from their own side -- some do and some do not. Phenomena exist out there; object and subject are related but they're still out there.

During the Third Turning of the Wheel, Buddha said, 'nothing is out there.' During the Second Turning, Buddha said, 'nothing exists from its own side; phenomena externally exist but they are merely imputed.'

This may be a little confusing to those who are new. I don't know, I cannot really tell who is new. But basically, the most important gist of this is that:

During the First Turning of the Wheel, Buddha said that all phenomena exist by way of their own character.

During the Second Turning of the Wheel, he said that nothing exists by way of its own character; and

During the Third Turning of the Wheel, he differentiated [phenomena's modes of existence].

THE SECOND WHEEL IS THE SUBJECT OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM COURSE

So what we are looking at in this course is the Second Wheel. We are not studying the First or Third Turnings of the Wheel of Doctrine in this course. The Fundamental Vehicle tenets and practice are the subject matter of other courses. For example, the courses known as the Collected Topics, Awareness and Knowledge (the Study of Mind in Tibetan Buddhism) present a lot of information about the Fundamental Vehicle tenets. The Mind Only school, the Third Turning of the Wheel, is included in the course study of Valid Cognition (Skt. *pramana-vartika*; Tib.), which is one of the subjects studied in the monastic curriculum and presented from the point of view of the Mind Only school. So if you want to find out more about those systems, you need to study those texts. But here, we are just looking at the teachings of the Second Turning of the Wheel, which are the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

So, there are two components of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*: the Middle Way tenets and the Middle Way practice. The Middle Way tenet is the final view, Emptiness, the lack of inherent existence. The practice is Universal Vehicle practice is *bodhicitta*, the six perfections and so forth.

Perfection of Wisdom Studies

So when we say we are studying the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, we are looking at the Method side. So that is the hidden meaning, if you like of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. Buddha taught both in the *Heart Sutra*, in all the different *Perfection of Wisdom*

Sutras he gave, he taught Emptiness and he taught the Path, or the practice. But he taught them in different ways. Emptiness was taught directly, explicitly. Whereas, the Path, the practice, the different meditations you must engage in, the Universal Vehicle practice, he taught (some say ‘implicitly’) in a hidden way. Not directly obvious.

If you listen, for example, to the *Heart Sutra*: “Emptiness is form, form is emptiness”, and so forth. The words do not actually talk about the Path as such, the words, themselves, do not express that. So, the Path is included in what the Buddha said in those *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* but only in an implicit way. Only some people understood it; not everyone did. But explicitly, he taught Emptiness. Implicitly, he taught the entire Path, the Bodhisattva Path, the Path to full enlightenment.

So in the monasteries, in the nunneries, in the traditional Tibetan study programs - and that includes, not just the Geluk system - the Geluk, the Nyingma, the Sakya, the Kagyu, the different Tibetan sects, they all study this. There is no difference. They all study the hidden meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. And then they also study the explicit meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. So in the Gelukpa system, they study the hidden meaning for about six years. Then they study the Middle Way, which is the explicit meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. So when you study Madhyamaka, you study the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. When you study the implicit meaning, the different practices and path, the *Ornament for Clear Realizations*, which is our subject here, you study the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

Actually, what do we study in all of the Tibetan monasteries and nunneries? Five Great Canonical Texts. Even in India – in Nalanda, in Vikramashila, the great monastic universities – these ‘Five Great Texts’, which include all of the Buddha’s teachings, were studied.

Five Great Texts studied in Tibetan Monastic Universities

What are the Five Great Texts?

The hidden meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* [as explained by Maitreya in the *Ornament*].

The Middle Way school, the explicit meaning the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

The Pramāṇavārtikā, the *Commentary on Valid Cognition*, a text that deals mainly with reasoning. What kind of reasoning? The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* reasoning.

The Abhidharma, or phenomenology.

The Vinaya, the discipline.

One great scholar, Jamyang Shes-ba wrote that the study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* is the different Paths that the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* indicate - that is the study of the first text, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* - the study of the paths of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. The second text, the Middle Way school text is the view of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, the direct view or the final view of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. The study of the *Commentary on Valid Cognition* is the study of the reasonings that are shown in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. The study of the Abhidharma or phenomenology is the study of the different enumerations, a kind of abbreviated summary of the earlier studies from the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. And the Vinaya is the practice of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. This is a little confusing. If you have some background knowledge, it is less confusing; if you don’t it is more confusing. But in other words, all I am saying is that we are actually studying the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* throughout the monastic curriculum of the Five Great Texts. So with all of the Five Great Texts, in one way or another, we deal with the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. But still, when we study the hidden meaning, the different paths of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, this is actually called the ‘study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.’ This is said to be the most important part really.

So, if we just take the two - this is a question I have for you - of the two, the direct-explicit meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, which is the view of Emptiness, and the implicit meaning which is the Universal Vehicle path - the two studies are both done. First during six years, we study the path, the *Ornament for Clear Realization* which is a commentary on that. Then for another three years, the explicit meaning, the Emptiness is being studied, in Tibetan, uma, the Middle Way.

So why is the implicit meaning, the study of the different paths and so forth, why is this called the study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and the study of the Madhyamaka is not? Why is it given that name? Why do you think? Really, both are studies of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. And I asked a couple of my teachers, why? And perhaps there's no final answer to that, but their answers make a lot of sense. One reason. Which of the two is more important from the Universal Vehicle standpoint? The study of the Universal Vehicle path or the study of Emptiness.

STUDENT QUESTIONS

Student: The paths.

Why is that?

Student: Because it's the cause.

Gen: Okay, because it's the cause. It's the cause of enlightenment; right. But Emptiness, understanding Emptiness . . .

Student: Paths lead to Emptiness.

Gen: That's true. Without the path, you cannot develop a mind that realizes Emptiness; right.

[Dogs enter classroom]

But another reason is, does Emptiness itself lead us to enlightenment; the realization of Emptiness, does that lead to enlightenment.

Student: No.

Gen: Why not?

[unintelligible response].

Gen: Just to become Self-Liberation, you realize Emptiness. Even for Self-Liberation, you need to realize Emptiness. So of the two, Wisdom and Method, the Method is actually more important for enlightenment, the method of the Universal Vehicle is more important. Because that is the decisive one. Just understanding Emptiness is not enough. So that was one of the reasons. I asked my teacher, why do you call the study of the O, the study of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*; even though when you study the Middle Way school, you study the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, the explicit meaning even.

So he said, one of the replies he gave was that because of the two, that's the more important one. That's the one that leads you to enlightenment.

Why do we study it first? Why do we study the path before we study Emptiness? Any idea, any suggestion? Why do we study the Universal Vehicle path first and then we go into Emptiness.

Student: To have a base.

Gen: Okay, to have a base. In which way?

Student 2: To have merit.

Student: In the heart.

Gen: What does it mean when we talk about paths? What is a path actually? It's a mind. It's a different kind of mind. It's a realization, exactly. They are called paths because they are different states of mind that lead us somewhere. Right now we don't have these kinds of minds.

Why do we study the Paths first? Why do we study the Universal Vehicle practice first and then we go into E?

Student 1: Only by experience can you understand Emptiness.

Gen: "Only by experience can you understand E"; okay. Anything else. I'm not saying that is right or wrong. I just want to hear from you.

Student 2: You need to accumulate merits.

Gen: You need to have the merits. Okay.

Student 3: Generate the path in the mind stream.

Gen. Okay. Anything else?

Student 4: To avoid extreme of nihilism.

Gen: Okay.

Student 5: To avoid wrong views.

Gen: Okay. These are all reasons basically. They are valid reasons. It's true: you accumulate merit and so forth. But another reason is that becoming Enlightened has been compared to going somewhere. So that is why we call it "Paths". We call it "Paths" because they lead us somewhere; they lead us to Enlightenment. So it is compared to a journey somewhere. So what does the study of the hidden meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, the Path, what does this study do? It lays out where we will go; where we can go wrong. This being part of the Universal Vehicle teachings, we want to go to full Enlightenment. So seeing the benefits of full Enlightenment, seeing how we can get there, understanding that, then we concentrate on Emptiness. If we first concentrate on Emptiness, and say you realize Emptiness, and your compassion is not strong enough, you must just go into a different kind of Path. So it is for us to actually determine where we want to go first. We study the different kinds of path. We get some kind overview of what we can do, what we need to do in order for us to then look at Emptiness, get a realization of that and move towards Enlightenment. So it is really the method side: compassion, bodhicitta and so forth, that's all included in the practice. We need to get an understanding of that; then we are moving in the right direction. So that is also one reason. I'm not saying that any of what you said is not right. All of these are reasons, but one of the main reasons is to not go astray.

THE PURPOSE FOR THESE STUDIES

And that leads us into why study anyway? And this has been a really difficult point for a lot of people. A lot of people, especially from other systems, not that familiar with the Geluk system, more familiar with other systems - but even in the Geluk system - a lot of people criticize the amount of studies that monks and nuns do in the monasteries.

The first thing I need to say, a lot of study, if you look at the amount of study that monks and nuns do, it's usually around 16 years. I personally don't think that's a very long time. Considering an entire lifetime, I think 16 years is not that much. If we think - yes.

Student 1: Starting from when?

Gen. Well, it depends, starting when they are 15. I'm not actually talking about what we call a worldly education—studying science, literature, mathematics and so forth. I'm talking of a Buddhist education in a monastery; it's usually around 16 years. In the Geluk tradition, it is 16 years. In the other monasteries, Sherab Ling for example now has a study program of 14-16 years. Dzongskar monastery, the Sakya monastery, 14-16 years. So now even the other monasteries they study for that long period of time. Just this morning, I was thinking, in the West, how many years do we study to become a doctor? You start with elementary school. You go through high school, college. Add it up, 16 years. It's really not that much.

But many of us may feel, 'Well, I've done my 16 years'. Most of us have gone through elementary and high school. So 'more studies'. The thing is, the only thing they have in common is that they are 'studies'; but the subject is completely different. If you've studied one thing, and you've never studied something else, in order to study something else, you have to start from scratch. Not with respect to everything. But with respect to Buddhism, if you have studied mathematics or science, it's helpful, but still you cannot get past the *Collected Topics* and certain subjects. So the importance of study - even though we have done study and it's great that we have; it's not useless. You will see that those people who have a worldly kind of education very often understand dharma a lot easier than someone in the monastery who's come from Tibet, maybe lived as a nomad, 15 years old when they start reading and writing - they find it much harder than we do. So we have a good basis. But still we need more time to study.

That's one reason. Another reason - just explaining that 16 years is not all that long. And I'm not saying that all of you should study 16 years. But give it some time.

Another reason is - do you know the *Three Wisdoms* - the Wisdoms of Hearing, Contemplation and Meditation. I've met a lot of foreigners who say, "What is the point of your studying? Go meditate." That is like saying there are not *Three Wisdoms* - there's just one, the Wisdom of Meditation. There's no Wisdom of Hearing. There's no Wisdom of Contemplation. "Go meditation" - what am I going to meditate on?

An expression from the Kadam-pa lamas, who were great practitioners, says
"Trying to meditate without having listened to teachings is like trying to climb a rock face with one's hands closed in a fist."

The thing is, of course, there's always a danger that it becomes merely academic; just like studying mathematics. But that is completely up to you. And from my own experience, when you do those studies, the kind of intense studies that hopefully we will do here - and I would like to ask you, not to just come here and forget about it and then get into the next class. Think about it; do some reading. Because all of this you can actually turn into meditation. It's part of what we call analytical meditation. The whole idea of listening and then debating, discussing, or just thinking about it, analyzing it internally - that's just part of the process; a kind of meditation. And you will find if you do it right, if you really spend a lot of time, and you let it get to your heart - not just up in the head but really let it get to the heart. Anything, when we talk about one of these great scholars like Nagarjuna, actually try to imagine these people. They are incredible beings. And in the beginning when we talk about this, there will be an introduction of some of these great beings, what they've done, the kind of teachings they've given for us to develop some kind of devotion.

So it is really up to each one of us. But if you do it in the way that it is done in the monasteries and nunneries, your whole life is this. It becomes a lot more difficult to do something negative because this sort of seems to protect you. Your mind is about this all the time. Right now we haven't really gone into the 4NT and karma (all this is going to come up). And when you think about this, it becomes part of you. It's not about '*knowing about*' anymore; but it's '*knowing*'. So the whole idea, an academic study would be just *knowing about* it as though it were something completely separate from ourselves. But the idea is to first find out about it, and try to internalize it as we go along.

And you will see it is going to have an effect on your life right away. You will be less likely to engage in trivial activities because there is something so much greater that you are thinking about, that you are analyzing. Give it a try. I don't know whether it is going to work out for you; but it definitely works if you give it more time, if you spend some time reading through it and try to get a deeper understanding of what we are talking about.

DIFFERENT PATHS & PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

Getting back to the different Paths. Before we actually go where we want to go, it is important for us to have an understanding of what is lying ahead, what we may expect. If you have no understanding and you just sit down to meditate, you just go off. That's so dangerous; we may as well just stay where we are right now. That's better. If we have no idea what we are doing and we engage in some kind of meditation, we have visions or something and have no idea what is going on. So it is so important to first understand where we are going.

As you go along - it takes six years to study this; a long time. Why does it take so long? Because there is a lot of detail. Why is there a lot of detail? Because it takes so long. Right? That's another thing that is a little difficult for us Westerners. Our concept of time has changed in the last one hundred years. There's no quick fix. Because, when we think about the mind that has been controlling us so far - I don't want to say 'ego'. If I say the 'ego controls us', it sounds as though there is some kind of 'ego' there; some kind of 'self' there is actually existing. But a mind that holds onto a self that actually does not exist, that mind has been controlling us for so long. And if I say 'so long', we need to put that into perspective. 'So long' means since beginningless time. We've been accustomed to acting out anything coming from that mind; anything that we do. The kind of happiness we get, we just get that from that mind. We have a very limited kind of happiness because it comes from that mind that perceives which actually doesn't exist; an exaggerated mind. So that's been controlling us; and we are so habituated. It is so strong. So we can never over-estimate the difficulty of undoing this. A habit that has been with us since beginningless time, it's so hard to actually let go of it. Therefore, this whole idea of following a path, myself included, we look for something that goes quite fast. That's one reason a lot of Westerners are interested in tantra, because it's said to be quick. But it's only quick when you are ready for it, and there's a lot of work before then.

So for me personally, when I first became a Buddhist nun, I thought, "Oh, five years, bodhicitta. Then, you know, path of seeing." I had no idea. I had read Milarepa's - okay, 'build a couple of towers; then meditate in a cave.' But it just didn't work. I couldn't do it. I didn't understand why I couldn't do it; and only when I started studying this, I realized. I'd just been trying to jump ahead which is just impossible. I need tiny little steps, each at a time, to undo these habits. And this study here shows us what the tiny little steps are. Getting an understanding of that, then I calmed down. 'All right. I've got all the time in the world. It's okay. One step at a time.' And that is really important for us Westerners. I think Tibetans have a different sense of time. I mean, if it takes you from east Tibet to Lhasa, five months on the back of a yak, you have different sense of time. It's not a two hour flight any more. Things may take longer, but that's fine.

Tibetans are very relaxed. They're not in a rush. They take each step at a time. They're relaxed about it; keep happy at the same time - which is really important. Because if you are not happy with what you are doing, you are not going to continue. Because the mind, the I, grasping onto the self, that's in control. If it doesn't get any kind of gratification, you are not going to go on. We shouldn't ignore this. This mind is still there. We shouldn't ignore it. We should look at it and find out how it works, and then slowly undo its working. And this study shows us how to do that. But it takes a long time. We've got all the time in the world. What else is there to do really? We're not in a rush. There's this life. There's next lives. As long as it takes, we're going to be around, so, just take it easy and enjoy.

This is really important. A lot of Westerners, sometimes they are so uptight. And they go into retreats and, if there's no happiness, they just give it up. They don't want to continue, so you need to have a certain degree of peace and happiness which comes with the whole thing, if you take every step at the appropriate time. But you need to know about the steps and path.

SELF-ESTEEM - BUDDHIST & SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES

There's something else that's very interesting. I read the other day in a magazine on psychology, some American magazine [from *Scientific American* publishing] that I really like. I think it's great. Because a lot of what is written in here is so close to Buddhism. A lot that science tells us. And Buddhism makes so much sense with the addition of this. So H.H. Dalai Lama is encouraging the Tibetans a lot, 'study more about science, psychology'. Because it's complementary. A lot of their recognitions are helpful to us as practitioners.



So this is one article that I really enjoyed about how we - look at this picture. How we overestimate our own abilities. I'm not talking about low self-esteem. These two are very closely related. It's just talking about, for example, when people are surveyed, 'How well they get along with others?' -- most respond that their social skills are 'above average.' Which the article says 'defies statistical possibilities'. It's just impossible. Or when they ask students, "How long will it take you to finish an assigned term paper?" Following up, the average time is actually three weeks longer than the students' original estimates.

Things take a lot longer than we imaginatively project. Say I'm thinking about going to Dharamsala to sort out my visa. Takes me a longer than I think - but that's for a different

reason.

Why do we Over-Estimate our Abilities

However, we generally over-estimate our abilities. The article cites many examples. Motorcyclists overestimating their skills and as a result getting killed under a big truck or something. So we do this all the time. And the reason they give for this. That's the most interesting part of the article:

Why do we over-estimate ourselves all the time? Because:

- We do not have enough information.
- We ignore some of the information that we have.
- We do not get enough feedback from others. We have a strong wish for something.

We have a very strong desire to drive a motorcycle or complete a task quickly. So because we lack the information; and because we want it so badly - and because we are egocentric, we don't compare ourselves to others. We just see, 'what I want and what I think I can do.' And that becomes our reality.

What we need to Travel the Path to Enlightenment

So what do we need? We need information.

Here, we're talking about traveling the Path to Enlightenment. We need to know what that means because it is so difficult: the mind is so complex, so intricate; the ego-mind is so clever. E.g., so you do something really nice for someone else, and what does the ego-mind do? "I hope people like me know and think I'm a really nice person." I do that all the time. I do something positive, and then I hope everyone has seen me doing it. You see this is how the ego mind works so cleverly.

So our psychology is so complex, so intricate that we need a very complex and intricate path to undo it. So we need to know about this. Otherwise, if we do not know about it, if we don't have enough information about it, then we go off.

Tantra & Over-Estimation.

If we overestimate, then we get the dorje and the bell, and we do all this tantric practice; yeah. And I am not saying, 'don't do it'; but be aware that the reason we are doing it is not necessarily because we are qualified, but because the teacher tells us to leave some imprints. And I'm not saying, 'don't go to initiations or something.' I'm not saying that.

H.H. the Dalai Lama sees a benefit. Why? Because Maitreya is not going to teach tantra. The future Buddha will not teach tantra, so we need to have some imprints. That's why we are going to this initiation. I don't think I've ever received an initiation. I don't know whether you have ever received an initiation. I have never received one. To receive an initiation, you must have certain qualification - and I know I don't have those. You have to have a certain degree of renunciation; certain degree of bodhicitta; and understanding of Emptiness.⁹ Sorry, I don't have those. So therefore, I've gone to initiations, but I have no hope of actually receiving them. And I'm still working on the ground work, and it's going to take me a long time, but that's fine. I think what helps is to understand, get more information so we don't over-estimate ourselves. That's one of the things. So I think these two go together.

We need feedback.

It says here, "In some areas such as athletics", people do not over-estimate themselves so much because the coach keeps say, 'you are not doing well enough', 'you're not this, blah, blah, blah.' It's just so obvious so people are a lot more realistic.

Whereas, with respect to social skills, we don't give feedback to someone, 'Oh, you are really silly. People really don't like you.' Right? Taking an extreme example.

So there's not as much feedback. We don't have as much information. We over-estimate ourselves.

So we need a teacher.

But I'm saying a real spiritual teacher. Someone like His Holiness. Someone who has actual realizations. Among us in this class, there's no teacher-something - it's just a friendly, sharing relationship. But you need to rely on a realized being. Some of these rinpoches like His Holiness and so forth, because they give you the feedback. They're like the coaches. So it is really beautiful. What is said in here is exactly the case.

⁹ ASK Gen-la - 'certain degree of meditative stabilization'

We over-estimate ourselves for those reasons. We want something so badly because of the urging of the 'I'. We want Enlightenment because it is the best, and we just want the best for ourselves anyway. Which is fine, you know. The 'I', the 'ego-mind' is there, and as long as we have it, we may as well cooperate with it. Go along with it; okay. We have that, we are set up that way. We shouldn't hate ourselves for that. We shouldn't deny it. But just work according to its mode of working. So wanting to become enlightened; great. That is the wish we have. But we need to have a lot of information, and we need feedback to not exaggerate.

Feedback does not necessarily have to come from a qualified teacher. Feedback can also come from our spiritual friends that maybe sometimes criticize or tell us, and we should not be offended; just take it as feedback that takes us away from this.

So I thought this would be interesting to share this article with you. To encourage you to go on with the study of this. Study, not just study in an academic way but to take it to a deeper level. Take all the information you can get - even if you do not do it here - wherever you go, read books, get an understanding.

H.H. Dalai Lama has said in a number of teachings that studying the first subject that we study in the monasteries, which is the *Collected Topics*, a preparation for debate - studying that for one month is far more beneficial for increasing intelligence than reciting the mantra of Manjushri for one month. He has said this on so many occasions. Just reciting mantra - yes, there's a blessing. Do that as well. But don't just concentrate on reciting the mantra of the Wisdom deity because that's just a small condition - the main cause for getting wisdom is getting an understanding, analyzing, thinking.

And some people who definitely do not need to study much, they read something and they understand right away. Like Milarepa. In his life story, there's not much talk about him doing a formal kind of study. But we are just talking about one life time of Milarepa. How do we know what he's done in previous lives. He must have left imprints. It doesn't just pop up like that - someone says 'E' and you go, 'yeah.' Sorry, it just doesn't work that way. Some of the people that we meet, for them it comes very easy, it's because they have done something in a past life. Just to be on the sure side, I don't know what I've done in my past lives, but I didn't have those 'pop' moments, so I had to work on it. I didn't have those insights, so I had to work through it. Because I didn't have the imprints, I don't think I had the imprints. But now, I've made them maybe in my next life, maybe it won't take so long. Maybe in the next life it won't take so long to learn Tibetan in the next life. Anyway.

So this is really like not just thinking of this life. All the study we do, it doesn't get lost. The imprints are with us, and it becomes easier every life. We are going to be around for awhile; that's for sure. I mean, I guess. I can't say. I'm going to be around; I can't say for each one of you. Anyway, this is just - no rush.

THE THREE VEHICLES OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

Getting back to the actual *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. We talked about the Three Wheels. We talked about the 'Three Yanas', the 'Three Vehicles'. So the Fundamental Vehicle, the Universal Vehicle and the Mantrayana or Tantra. These are the Three Vehicles, and they are all included in the Three Wheels.

How is the Universal Vehicle included in the Three Wheels of Doctrine?

Universal Vehicle is included in the Second and the Third Wheels. The Buddha gave teachings on tantra during the Second Turning of the Wheel and the Third Turning of the Wheel at different places. Sometimes he appeared in different bodies, he took on the body of a deity. The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* were taught to fewer disciples than to the teachings of the Fundamental Vehicle tenets and practice which were taught to a wide audience.

To Whom was the Second Wheel Taught?

The Universal Vehicle was taught to a slightly smaller audience. The Universal Vehicle, sometimes, was taught to only one person. According to the texts, sometimes Buddha gave an initiation to just one or two people. So it was not like a big initiation and all the people came with flasks or something; no. Just one or two people. And even now days, that hasn't changed. Lots of people come for the initiations, but only receive a blessing. Usually, if H.H. Dalai Lama gives an initiation, for instance, Drikung Kagyu Rinpoche was here for the Monlam teachings last month. He was probably one of the few who received the initiation. His Holiness the Karmapa, some of the higher spiritual teachers in terms of their realizations, they actually receive the initiations. We didn't. That's fine. We received the blessings. We went through the motions and received imprints.

So nowadays, it still works the same way as when Buddha first gave the teaching. At the time of the Buddha, Universal Vehicle was secret, taught in secret to just a very few people.

The Spread of the Second Wheel after Buddha's Passing – Nagaland.

After the Buddha's passing away, the Fundamental Vehicle teachings stayed and spread far and wide. For forty years after the Buddha's passing away, the Universal Vehicle teachings disappeared from public view.

Not that they completely disappeared. According to Indian and Tibetan legends, the Nagas, the serpent king, took all the Universal Vehicle teachings, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* to the Nagaland. That's the legend. Really, what probably happened, not many people were practicing the Universal Vehicle teachings.

What were they kept secret for so long?

they were not transmitted openly but in secret because the teachings on Emptiness were able to engender strong negative views, such as the extreme nihilism, in people. So this is a great danger. So it was passed on in secret. So a lot of people did not know of the existence of the Universal Vehicle teachings.

The public teachings of the Buddha were the Fundamental Vehicle which were taught to huge numbers of people, spread to many countries, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and so forth. Universal Vehicle teachings, many people did not know they existed because they were taught in secret. Tantra was taught even more secretly.

How & When did the Universal Vehicle teachings Come to Light?

Therefore, the Universal Vehicle teachings, the teachings of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, they only reappeared 400 years after the Buddha's passing away. They were 're-discovered' or 're-published' if you like by Nagarjuna. Naga means serpent. As the legend goes, Nagarjuna is the one who went to the Naga land and found the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. That's why they call him Nagarjuna, because he went to the Naga land.

In reality, I think what probably happened was - there are different accounts. Some people say there was actually a serpent kingdom Nagaland. Some people say that this refers to the actual place in India still today, called Nagaland where the people call themselves Naga. Some people say that there was a group of yogis, Naga yogis, that were still practicing the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and Nagarjuna saw that the time was ripe to reintroduce them to the masses. People by then had studied and practiced the Fundamental Vehicle over many lifetimes and they were ripe. So 400 years after Buddha's passing, many people were ready to receive the Universal Vehicle teachings.

So circa 150 AD/CE, Nagarjuna reintroduced the Middle Way tenets, the Second Turning of the Wheel teachings. The tantric teachings were only reintroduced the wider masses in the 4th or 5th century AD, the 4th or 5th century of this common era. So that is why many people believe that the Universal Vehicle and tantric teachings were not given by the

Buddha; they were some kind of invention. Who can blame them? If you never knew of the existence of those teachings and someone suddenly comes up and says these are the Buddha's teachings, you would say, 'No way.' Unless you examine them and see how profound they are, and understand, it is difficult to have faith. So I cannot 'blame' people who assert that the Universal Vehicle and Universal Vehicle teachings were not actually given by the Buddha.

Getting back to the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* that were re-introduced by Nagarjuna - I'll talk more about Nagarjuna, his life story, later on along with the life stories of some of the other great beings [who transmitted the Universal Vehicle lineage].

Guru Devotion & the Great Indian Lineage Masters

For a long time I did not know the life stories of the great beings of this lineage - Nagarjuna, Asanga and so forth. I had no idea who they were. When were they born? Where were they born? What were they life? No clue; right. And it is really hard to have faith unless you know something about them, so I think it is very good to have some idea, and visualize them, imagine them walking on the plains of India with begging bowls and incredible practice, amazing understanding and practice. So that the Guru Devotion that is one of the first subjects of the *Lam Rim* may arise.

Nagarjuna and these great beings, they have attained - at that time, they were on a very high level. So they have probably attained Enlightenment by now, and if not they are still around.

There is a very common practice in the Tibetan society that when you do not understand a text, you make prayers to the person who composed the text. There are so many accounts of a person making prayers to the person who composed the text before going to sleep at night, with devotion in their heart, waking up in the morning understanding the text. This has worked for a lot of people so I can only encourage you to try it.

If there's a text you find really difficult, by someone like Nagarjuna, and you don't understand the meaning, it is not just academic. It's not like studying math or history. It's studying but there's more to it, a deeper level. There are beings around us waiting to help us and it is up to us to actually open ourselves up to their blessings, their help, and we can do that by making prayers. I don't know whether it works if you make prayers to Einstein to understand the calculations proving his theory of relativity. Anyway, I'm talking about special beings.

We need to have the kind of devotion and openness - we have to be open to their blessings, their knowledge. We can only be open, only have devotion for them if we know something about their lives. That's why I'll talk more about Nagarjuna, Asanga, et al. Who were they? What did they do. Not in great deal.

THE VENERABLE MOTHER

The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are also given a certain name, they are called the "Venerable Mothers". In Tibetan it is actually 'Yum.' Sometimes this is translated as '*Her Ladyship*'. 'Yum' is the honorific form for 'mother'. In Tibetan, when we talk about His Holiness's mother, we say 'Gyal-wa Rinpoche gyi Yum.' So sometimes 'Yum' is translated as 'Venerable Mother' to indicate the honorific. But [in English] 'Mother' is honorific [compared to 'mom', etc.]. So 'the Mother.'

Why do you think the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are called 'Mother', 'Mother sutras'? Any suggests? Yeah. Because they give birth to the Buddhas, they are like a mother.

Have you ever read the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*? I think most of you have probably read the *Heart Sutra* and its mantra - 'Tayata om ga-te ga-te para-ga-te para-sam-ga-te bodhi sva ha'. That is the name mantra of Prajnaparamita, the Venerable Mother. That is the name mantra of the Prajnaparamita goddess. So you see, even

though this is a sutric teaching, there is some tantra there already. Because a mantra is actually a tantric practice.

So sutra and mantra are not completely separate; they are not supposed to be separate. The Three Vehicles are not supposed to be separate. We need to understand that at a certain point in time we need to do one practice more strongly.

We need to do the Fundamental Vehicle before we are ready for the others. They are really stepping-stones. The Fundamental Vehicle first. Then the Universal Vehicle and then the Tantrayana Vehicle. These are stepping stones, but even for a practitioner of the Universal Vehicle, who is actually ready for tantra, he still practices the Three Vehicles.

The Tibetan Kadam-pa masters, had a saying:

“Externally practice the gentle ways of the *Shravakas*¹⁰, internally practice the Bodhisattva perspective, and secretly practice the way of mantra.”

So we go step-by-step until we can practice all Three Vehicles.

That finishes today’s class.

། ལྷོན་པ་མཉམ་མེད་ཤུགས་རྒྱལ་པོ་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་དང་པོར་བྱང་ཆུབ་མཆོག་ཏུ་བྱུགས་བསྐྱེད།¹¹

བར་དུ་བསྐྱལ་པ་བྱངས་མེད་གསུམ་དུ་ཚོགས་བས་གས།¹² མཐར་དེ་རྗེ་གདན་གྱི་སྤོ་ལ་མངོན་
པར་རྫོགས་པར་སངས་རྒྱས་ཏེ་¹³

ཡུལ་ལྷ་ར་ཅ་སིར་¹⁴ ལྷ་སྤེ་བཟང་པོ་¹⁵ ལ་བདེན་པ་བཞིའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་མཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར།¹⁶ དེ་
ནས་བྱུ་^[17/171] རྫོད་ཡུང་པའི་རི་བོར་¹⁷ བཀའ་བར་པ་¹⁸ མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་¹⁹ ཆོས་འཁོར་

¹⁰ Those who follow the practice aspect of the Fundamental Vehicle, aspiring to self-liberation, are of two types: Hearers [Skt. *Shravakas*; Tib.] and Solitary Realizers [Skt. ; Tib.]

¹¹ First. The peerless teacher (ལྷོན་པ་མཉམ་མེད་), King of the Shakyas (ཤུགས་རྒྱལ་པོ་) initially (དང་པོར་) generated (བསྐྱེད་) the mind (བྱུགས་) dedicated to attaining highest enlightenment (བྱང་ཆུབ་མཆོག་). དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་

¹² Then (in the middle – བར་དུ་) (he) for three countless aeons (བསྐྱལ་པ་བྱངས་མེད་གསུམ་དུ་) [amassed] the collections (ཚོགས་བས་གས་) [of merit and wisdom].

¹³ Finally (མཐར་), in the vicinity (spo la) of Bodhgaya, he became completely and perfectly enlightened.

¹⁴ ལྷ་ར་སི་ – Varanasi

བསྐྱོར།²⁰ དེ་ནས་ཡངས་པ་ཅན་²¹ ལ་སོགས་པར་ལེགས་པར་རྒྱུ་བའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་
²² གྱུ་ཆེར་བསྐྱོར་ཏེ།²³

^a ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་ <Skt. prajnaparamita> <sometimes abbreviated as པར་ཕྱིན་> 1) Perfection of Wisdom; transcendent wisdom, ultimate transcendent knowledge. 2) 10th of the 10 perfections of Bodhisattva practices. 3) Buddha-goddess (whose ཡབ་ is རྗེ་མཆོག་).

ཤེས་རབ་ <Skt. – prajna> [know-highest]. 1) knowledge/ wisdom. insight; understanding; knowledge. 2 one of the 5 determining mental factors (ཡུལ་ངེས་ལྔ་, viSaya-pratiniyama).

པ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་ <Skt. paramita> <abbrv. པར་ཕྱིན་> 1) [other side-to-

¹⁵ ལྔ་སྟེ་བཟང་པོ་ – <abbrv of – འཁོར་ལྔ་སྟེ་བཟང་པོ་> “The Excellent Five” – referring to Buddha Shakyamuni’s yogi companions to whom He gave the First Wheel Turning Teaching on the Four Noble Truths in Varanasi

¹⁶ ཆོས་ཀྱི་མཁོར་ལོ་ lo – <Skt – dharma-cakra > 1) wheel of doctrine. མཁོར་ – <past & fut of v.t. skor ba – to turn> turned

At Varanasi for the five good ascetics, he turned the wheel of doctrine of the four [noble] truths

¹⁷ བྱ་རྩོད་ལུང་པོའི་རི་ – Vulture Peak/Hill in Magadha. བྱ་རྩོད་ – <skt – gRdhra> bird of prey, vulture. ལུང་པོའི་ – piled-up hill, peak.

¹⁸ བཀའ་བར་པ་ – the Middle [Turning of the Wheel of] Buddha’s teachings. བཀའ་ Buddha’s word/teachings; <Hon. for speech, etc>

¹⁹ མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ – characterless(ness), signlessness; absence of characteristics (མཚན་ཉིད་); non-character; unmarked.

²⁰ **Then on Vulture Peak he turned the wheel of doctrine of characterlessness.**

²¹ ཡངས་པ་ཅན་ – 1) Vaisali [p.n. of a city] in Magadha, ancient capital of Licchavi republic where Buddha taught

²² ལེགས་པར་རྒྱུ་བའི་ཆོས་འཁོར་ – a wheel of doctrine of good differentiation.. Syn. འཁོར་ལོ་ཐ་མ་ – the third and final turning of the wheel of doctrine in which Buddha taught the Three Natures of all phenomena -- Thoroughly Established Nature (emptiness), ཡོངས་གྲུབ་; Other Powered Natures (impermanent phenomena are established by way of their own character), གཞན་དབང་; Imputational Natures (permanents and phenomena’s being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses are not established by way of their own character), ཀུན་བཏགས་ -- in the Seventh Chapter, the Questions of Paramarthasamudgata chapter of the Samdhinirmocana-sutra (དགོངས་པ་ངེས་པར་འགྲེལ་པའི་མདོ།)

²³ **Then, at Vaishali and other places, he extensively (cher) turned the wheel of of doctrine of good differentiation.**

went]; that which has gone beyond, gone to the other side/shore, "gone across" and meaning perfection / transcendent, i.e., transcendental/ transcending action/ virtue ways of overcoming limitations. Particularly, transcending concepts of subject, object and action.

2) The Paramita vehicle (* གྲི་ཐེག་པ་) is the Mahayana system of the gradual path through the five paths and ten bhumis according to the Prajnaparamita scriptures. See also 'six paramitas.'

བསྐྱུས་བྱ་ – Collected Topics.

སྒྲོ་རིག་པ་ – Awareness and Knowledge; epistemology, attention; typology of mind (a literary genre)

སྒྲོ་རིག་པ་ – tenet, tenet system, system of tenets.